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Beginnings
of
American Methodism

Robert Strawbridge, Founder

By Mrs. Arthur Barneveld Bibbins, Ph. M.

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Robert Strawbridge.



His Birthplace, Drumsnaugh, Ireland.



Robert Strawbridge.



His Birthplace, Drumsnaugh, Ireland.



Birthplace of American Methodism.

Robert Strawbridge's House, First Preaching Place in America. The log house is now weatherboarded. The door by the steps and the window above, this side of the chimney, show the addition at the right of the original log house, now owned by Daniel Utz, one and a half miles from New Windsor, Md. Those in the picture from right to left are: Philip B. Shader, who owned the adjoining farm many years; W. E. Baker, and Charles Jones, whose wife was the granddaughter of Henry Maynard, who was baptized by Strawbridge in 1762.

The Beginnings of American Methodism

CHAPTER I.

What Brought Robert Strawbridge from Ireland to Maryland.

The Pipe Creek region and that of its tributary Sam's Creek, in Maryland, have always been as notable for natural beauty and abundance as for the spiritual fervor here inspired.

When one notes the fertility of the soil, the picturesque beauty of the landscape rolling away from the Linganore Hills to the veiled summits of the Catoctin and Blue Ridge Mountains, there appear reasons enough not only to have attracted the earliest settlers to this region, but to have uplifted those who came after them to the heights of religion, poesy and song, and to have inspired movements world-wide in their influence.

The name "Wakefield Valley," the exquisite stretch of lowland east of New Windsor, though presumably derived from the "Wakefield family," whose home still stands historic as that of Henry Willis, the associate of Robert Strawbridge, and host of Francis Asbury, holds in it a suggestion of an older "Wakefield," the manor of the Washington family in Virginia. This latter was the birthplace of George Washington across the Potomac in old Westmoreland, a score and more of years before Strawbridge sailed up the Chesapeake to penetrate into the mountain fastnesses of Western Maryland.

Among the first to covet these salubrious hills



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were men from the low-lying and at times malarial plantations of the Potomac. The Washingtons moved from "Wakefield" to Fredericksburg and Mount Vernon farther up the river, and many of their neighbors on both sides of the Potomac preceded or followed them.

A dozen years before George Washington saw the light at "Old Wakefield," in Virginia, there came to Washington Parish, the parish of the Washington family, a young clergyman, Rev. Lawrence DeButts by name, an M. A., fresh from Trinity College, Dublin. This was also the Alma Mater of Daniel Dulany, the elder, who had recently come to Maryland, and whose son destined to become the famous opponent of the Stamp Act was the source from whom the great Pitt drew the admonition which led to its repeal.

After serving Washington and other Virginia parishes some years, Rev. Lawrence DeButts resolved to cross the Potomac and join his brother, Robert, who about the same time determined to leave his plantation in St. Mary's County, Md., and try his fortunes in the healthier upland regions of this province.

Sailing up the Potomac to Georgetown, he with Benjamin Tasker, the Dulanys, Carrolls, Bruces, and Keys penetrated into the interior beside the Monocacy River, along the old Indian trail which led from Virginia up into Pennsylvania.

First Settlers of Frederick County.

Taking up land upon its waters and adjacent hill-sides these men opened up to settlement what later as Frederick County became as early as 1790, and long remained the richest agricultural county in the Union.

"Tasker's Chance," of 7,000 acres, was patented in 1727, by Benjamin Tasker, and later conveyed to Daniel Dulany. Robert DeButts purchased a part of

"Tasker's Chance," and also a tract called "Albin's Choice," where he dwelt from 1736 to 1751, and then sold it to Dulany. Other holdings, a "Hunting Lott," on the Monocacy, "Spring Gardens," "Sun Down and Moon Up," he added, one in the vicinity of Charles Carroll's great manor of "Carrollton," which rendered his name historic affixed to the Declaration of Independence, and another near the thousand-acre tract of Philip Key. This later as "Terra Rubra" (or "Red Lands") on Pipe Creek, became the birth-place in 1779 of the author of the national anthem, Francis Scott Key, the famous lyricist, whose songs reflect in a remarkable degree the religious fervor of this abounding section.

For the tracts mentioned, Captain DeButts, now commanding the frontier militia, was still paying the Lord Proprietary considerable quit-rents in 1750, ten years before Strawbridge arrived, as shown by the original rent rolls of Prince George and Frederick County, which in the collection of the Calvert Papers were purchased from the heirs of Lord Baltimore in England in 1888, and became the possession of the Maryland Historical Society.

That many of the earliest tracts in Frederick County and in the Sam's Creek region, were taken up by people from Ireland is evident by the fact that the first survey of which there is any record, near Sam's Creek, was "Park Hall," a tract of 2,680 acres, taken up in 1727 by James Carroll, of King's County, Ireland (deputy surveyor in Maryland for Lord Baltimore), who dying two years later, left his lands to his nephew.

Today, when one seeks to identify the original homestead and farmland of Robert Strawbirdge he is confronted by a clause in the ancient deed which shows that this old "Park Hall" tract was one of its boundaries. Should further connecting-link with the past be needed, the white "Park Hall School

House" is pointed out glimmering in the distance upon an adjacent hilltop.

What indeed caused Strawbridge to select Frederick County as his new world domicile, but the proximity of his countrymen there, and their reputed success from the earliest settlement?

Among the first actual settlers was Captain DeButts. The earliest records of St. Paul's Parish, which by the Act of 1692 included this region and made the Church of England the established religion of Maryland, show that Margaret DeButts, eldest child of Robert, was born in this parish April 27, 1732. It was to this daughter that Robert bequeathed one of the "original lots in Frederick Town," which he purchased from Dulany, shortly after he laid out the town in 1745. It was her son, Luke Bernard, a leading official of this section, who coming early under the influences of Methodism, gave the site for the first Methodist Church which shortly after he aided in erecting at Woodsboro, on one of the lots purchased from his friend, Colonel Joseph Wood, the Revolutionary officer who laid out the town upon his farm shortly after the Revolution.*

Strawbridge Attracted to This Region.

In the light of after events, it is interesting to note that while the uncle of Margaret DeButts, the Rev. Lawrence, remained in Southern Maryland, as rector of William and Mary Parish (from 1732 to 1752) and in 1750 rebuilt Old Poplar Hill, or St. George's Church (still standing) the successor of the oldest

*This century-old enapel of early Methodism on the old "Monocacy Trail," the western colonial highway between north and south, was recently found by the writer, a descendant of Luke Bernard, to have been removed (when abandoned as a church about 1890) a half mile down the Creagerstown Road from Woodsboro, where it now forms the front portion of the dwelling of an old resident by the name of Baker.

Protestant Church in Maryland, his brother, Captain Robert DeButts and his associates, in opening Frederick County to settlement were attracting hither an immigrant from their former home in Ireland, destined to stir the Established Church to its centre. Starting here a movement in America which was to become the most vigorous offspring of the Anglican Church, Robert Strawbridge was soon to make of this region a mecca for the devoted adherents of the new evangelism for all time to come.

The home of the DeButts brothers was in Sligo, in the north of Ireland. Their father, John, was at one time provost of Sligo, and their forbears, after removal from England, established thereabouts for some generations. Reports of the success of the young planters Dulany, DeButts, the Carrolls and others from Ireland, in this rich frontier region, were soon carried back home to the old country. The news was spread abroad that settlers were desired



St. George's, or Old Poplar Hill Church, St. Mary's County, Md.
Rebuilt in 1750, by Rev. Lawrence DeButts, from Sligo, Ireland.

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St. George's, or Old Poplar Hill Church, St. Mary's County, Md.
Rebuilt in 1750, by Rev. Lawrence DeButts, from Sligo, Ireland.

in this part of the province of Maryland, where the exceptional policy of religious toleration, enacted into law a half century before the establishment of the Church of England, had made welcome the Puritan and Quaker as early as 1649, and also made possible here the foundation of the Presbyterian Church in America in 1683.

It was therefore not surprising that the fervent apostle of Irish Methodism, Robert Strawbridge, who had been driven by persecution to cross the River Shannon from his birthplace, Drumsnaugh,* Leitrim, and forced to take refuge in hospitable Sligo, should later be attracted to this part of the new world opened up to settlement by a son of Sligo, whose attachment for this old home name led him to bestow it on a faithful slave bequeathed to a son.

After preaching in County Sligo where "his labors were signally blessed of God through a considerable district" (according to Shillington, his early chronicler; Stevens' "History Methodist Episcopal Church," vol. I., 71). Strawbridge subsequently preached in the County of Armagh, residing mostly at Tanderagee, "where he sounded the alarm through all that populous rural district."

Tanderagee was but a few miles from the east coast of Ireland, where Dublin, Belfast, Newry and other of its most popular ports were situated.

The question not unnaturally arises, "What inducements besides the presence of countrymen from his native section of North Ireland led Strawbridge to Maryland and Frederick County?" "Why came he hither, instead of to New York, where had he arrived either before or after Philip Embury, the vexatious question of Maryland's priority in Methodism would never have been raised.

*While Strawbridge was born in Ireland, there is good reason to believe, according to Dr. J. F. Goucher, that he was of English origin and of a long lineage.

What traffic and means of transportation existed at this early date between Ireland and Maryland? What caused Maryland to become Strawbridge's goal, and to become thereby in the minds of many the cradle of American Methodism?

Some years ago, as a recent graduate of Goucher College, that centenary memorial to American Methodism, ably founded by Dr. Goucher, the writer, Fellow in History at Bryn Mawr, spent a year at Oxford, England, in a study of the causes that led to the settlement of America and particularly of Maryland. Under the tutelage of the well known Wesleyan Fellow of Lincoln, the Welsh historian Owen Edwards, the great religious movements that revolutionized England and colonized America were dwelt upon.

A visit one day across the quadrangle of Lincoln College to the rooms where the Holy Club of Methodism first drew its inspiration, and where the prophetic face of the youthful Wesley still hung upon the wall, impelled to a keener quest for data as to the American origin of that propulsive movement.

Soon after, careful search in the British Public Record Office, London, where the chronicles from Domesday Book are kept, revealed some of the earliest sailings from Ireland to Maryland.

Maryland Exports Wheat to Ireland.

These corroborated by others found in two huge parchment tomes containing the original "Entries and Clearances at the Port of Annapolis, 1754-1776," now in the custody of the Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, explained in part why Maryland became such a goal for Irish emigrants.

As the southern colonists penetrated into the upland regions of the province along the upper Potomac, the Monocacy and the Patapsco Rivers, and were joined by the tide of German settlers streaming down the Monocacy and other "trails" from Pennsylvania, they found the soil formed from the disintegrating

rock of this section far better suited for grain culture with white labor, than to the old tide-water crop tobacco, with its attendant slave labor.

Baltimore was started in 1730, and Frederick Town, as before noted, in 1745. In this latter year Dr. John Stevenson and his brother, Henry, two young Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, arrived in Baltimore Town from Londonderry, North Ireland.

Although both were Oxford men, and with the best medical training England could afford, the former was so impressed with the strategic situation of Baltimore at the head of the Bay, and its relation to the resources of the "back country," that he soon began the wheat trade with Ireland, the West Indies and the American coast cities.

This developed to such an extent that Sir William Draper, upon a later visit, conferred on him the title of the "American Romulus," for having thus laid the foundation of the city's wealth.

By 1760, a public road had been established between Baltimore and the "back country" as far as Frederick. Another had been previously opened between Frederick and Annapolis which until the Revolution was the chief port for the shipment of tobacco, grain and flax, and for the arrival of immigrants.

The first shipment of wheat to Ireland appears to have been on May 19, 1757, when the snow "Alexander" (Maryland built) carried 6,237 bushels of wheat, 20 barrels of flour, 24 barrels of bread, 6 tons of iron, and 1,415 barrel staves and heading to the great eastern port of Dublin.

Maryland Ships in Strawbridge's Vicinity.

This was followed three weeks later on June 6, by a smaller cargo to Dublin, on the brigantine "Betty and Peggy," and in her company sailed the good ship "Hayfield," with 6,000 bushels of wheat and 300 barrels of flour to the port of Newry, from whence she had arrived at Annapolis on May 23.

Newry was but ten or twelve miles from Tanderagee, Strawbridge's home, while Dublin was but fifty miles farther south. The welcome tidings of Maryland prosperity which these ships brought must have echoed far and wide along the coast and speedily have reached Strawbridge's ears with their promise of abundance near his transplanted countrymen, and the implied need for religious ministrations in a fast-developing frontier region.

On June 25, 1759, the brigantine "Sharpe," sailed from Annapolis for Cork. She returned to Annapolis after a year's absence in Irish waters on September 24, 1760, with a cargo of 4,011 bushels of salt from Liverpool, having no doubt called at the principal Irish ports after her arrival at Cork.

On November 28, 1759, the snow "Salford," entered the port of Annapolis with salt from Liverpool, although she had no doubt touched at east Irish ports before crossing the Irish Sea to Liverpool. No other vessels were entered at Annapolis from Irish ports, or from English ports adjacent to Ireland in 1759.

On March 6, 1760, the "Salford" cleared from Annapolis, direct for the North Irish port of Londonderry, with the usual welcome Maryland cargo of flour, iron, and flaxseed, and 6,600 barrel staves and heading. Like the "Sharpe," the "Salford" remained apparently more than a year in Irish waters gathering her cargo and passengers, and returned to Annapolis November 26, 1761, from Londonderry, with a large lading of "European goods."

Londonderry was the chief port of Northern Ireland, and that from which the Stevensons had come to Baltimore. The distance about sixty miles from Tanderagee, could easily have been traversed by the man who was to become the first apostle of the intinerancy in America.

That Strawbridge arrived at Annapolis on the first or second voyage of the "Salford"—November

28, 1759, or November 26, 1761, or upon the return of the "Sharpe," September 24, 1760, seems highly probable, and the more so because it is substantiated by well-defined tradition and accredited records.

If he arrived by the "Salford," November 28, 1759, or the "Sharpe," September 24, 1760, he was here as most early accounts claim, "in the year 1760." If he did not come until the second voyage of the "Salford," from Londonderry, which ended at Annapolis, November 26, 1761, Strawbridge would still have been in Maryland to have preached some time before "he baptized Henry Maynard, when he was but four or five years of age." This baptism has always been said to have occurred in 1762, at the home of Henry's half-brother, John Maynard, Strawbridge's "second regular preaching place beside his own house." New proof has lately come to light to establish Henry Maynard's age at this date.

That Strawbridge must have come by either ship is confirmed by the fact that no vessel beside the "Salford" arrived in 1761, and none whatever from an Irish port in 1762.

The entries furthermore show that but one ship arrived from Ireland in 1763, and but one from an Irish port in 1764, and this latter from a distant West Irish port remote from Strawbridge's home.

Another Strawbridge Arrives in Maryland.

The one arrival in 1763, the ship "Prosperity," of 90 tons, brought moreover the suggestion that Robert Strawbridge's presence in Maryland before this date had now attracted one of his kinsmen hither. On February 11, 1763, this good ship, with a crew of 10 men, under command of Captain John Strawbridge, Master, arrived at Annapolis. She was registered as "a New York prize, Dec. 20, 1762." How Captain Strawbridge reached New York there is no record, but he evidently took command of the prize at New York, and then sailed her to Maryland "in

ballast," as it is stated, for the cargo he felt sure he could there obtain.

After several weeks spent in lading his cargo of 500 hhds. of flaxseed and 200,000 barrels staves and heading, he cleared on February 28, 1763, for Belfast, which was but twenty-five miles from Robert Strawbridge's former home at Tanderagee.

The prompt disposal of his Maryland products seems to have persuaded Captain Strawbridge to an immediate return, for he was back again, entering Annapolis, on October 21, 1763, the only arrival, as we have noted, from an Irish port in this year. His cargo this time consisted of two boxes of (the soon-to-be obnoxious) tea imported from London to New York, where he registered October 10; with wine, claret and sugar of Guadeloupe brought on to Maryland. The query naturally arises: "Why should Captain Strawbridge have extended his voyage from the chief port of New York to Maryland, if Robert Strawbridge were not already there?" The very considerable extension of this voyage to Maryland suggests a much stronger attraction here than a commercial one.

He remained two months, affording time to visit Strawbridge in his new home in Frederick County, and sailed December 16, 1763, this time to Cork, with a large cargo of flaxseed, staves and walnut plank, the owners on these voyages being Messrs. Waddell Cunningham, and Gregg.

It has now been shown that convenient passage was at hand in Robert Strawbridge's immediate vicinity in 1759, 1760 and 1761; that there were no ships by which he could arrive except the three named in those years, since none came to Annapolis from an Irish port, in 1762, and only Captain John Strawbridge's ship in 1763, and one from a distant port in 1764.

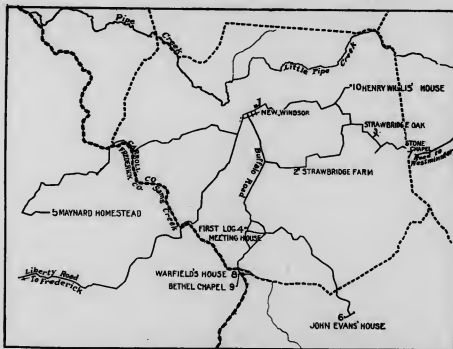
These facts, set forth in the official port entries

made 150 years ago, as these ships came in, are seen to be in singular harmony with the traditions and statements of early writers, that Robert Strawbridge was in Maryland in 1760 or 1761.

The reasons for his emigration to Maryland are seen to have been the presence of his countrymen here, religious freedom, the promise of abundance, and the demand in Ireland for the new wheat crop, together with the availability of Maryland ships which supplied ready transportation to his immediate locality in the years noted.

These reasons would seem to answer the question, "Why Strawbridge found Maryland the promised land rather than elsewhere." The port records also answer the question, "When he arrived," from the point of view of the ships available in Ireland at that time.

By courtesy of "The Christian Advocate."



The Birthplace of Methodism on Sam's Creek, Maryland.

(1) New Windsor. (2) Strawbridge Farm. (3) Strawbridge Oak. (4) Log Meeting House. (5) Maynard Homestead. (6) John Evans House. (7) Stone Chapel. (8) Warfield's House. (9) Bethel Chapel. (10) Henry Willis' House.

CHAPTER II.

Rise of Methodism in Maryland.

The reasons for Robert Strawbridge's emigration to Maryland have been previously considered. The time of his arrival and of the beginning of his work were so well known to early Methodists that it was not thought important to chronicle date and deed in the face of the abounding results in converts and itinerants raised up in the frontier wilderness as the seal of his labors.

Later on, when Strawbridge's masterful initiative had merged into a great movement, and the time and circumstances of its beginnings were called in question, some there were who in justice to the man who had contended for the distinctive features which led to the organization of the church as a separate body, asserted what they had always heard as fact, and what was also the testimony of eye-witnesses and contemporaries.

Bishop McTyiere, in his "History of Methodism," says: "Rev. Mr. Hamilton, whose district embraced Stone Chapel (the successor of the Log Meeting House), and who had the best means of gathering information, in the 'Methodist Quarterly Review' for July, 1856, fixes the date of Strawbridge's arrival at Sam's Creek about 1759 or 1760, and the building of the Log Chapel in 1764." This conclusion is borne out as we have noted before, in the data presented as to the available Irish ships which arrived in Maryland at this time.

The diligent researches of Dr. George C. M. Roberts, in the "Christian Advocate," of 1858, and in his "Centenary Album," of 1866, derived from the letters of Michael Laird, and others closely associated with Strawbridge, and from investigations at first hand,

show him fully conversant with facts significantly confirmed by inquiries made within the past few months, a half-century after his statements were made.

Dr. Roberts states: "Mr. Strawbridge came to America in 1760 with his family, and settled on Sam's Creek. He opened his house for divine worship at once, and continued preaching therein regularly. These efforts soon after resulted in the awakening and conversion of several who attended . . . and in the formation in his dwelling of his first class meeting. His work was soon extended to several places in that and other neighborhoods. He very soon built what is commonly known as the Log Meeting House, a short distance from his dwelling." Stevens says, "About a mile from his house."

Dr. Roberts continues: "It is stated that Henry Maynard was baptized by Strawbridge when he was but four or five years of age. At the time Mr. Strawbridge was engaged in preaching regularly at the house of John Maynard, the half-brother of Henry. He was present with his father on one of these occasions when Mr. S. baptized him at the spring which was near at hand, a few hundred yards from the dwelling." Dr. Roberts adds: "Henry Maynard was born August 12, 1757. This fixes his baptism as early as 1762. Ephraim Maynard, who is still living on Sam's Creek, Carroll County, Md., in a statement made to our artist, Mr. Thomas C. Ruckle, on the 17th of May, 1866, says that he was perfectly familiar with the baptism of Henry Maynard, that it was at the spring near the house, where Mr. Strawbridge had taken the boy, but four or five years of age."

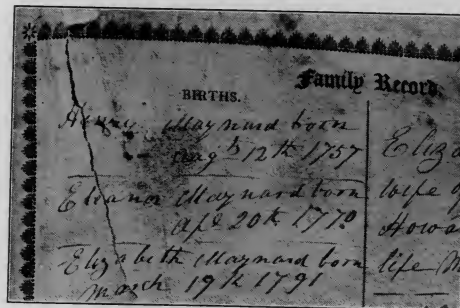
Believing that the crux of the long-debated question of the time of Strawbridge's arrival and the priority of Maryland Methodism could be largely determined by documentary evidence concerning Henry

Maynard, we recently sought to learn what was available concerning him and his descendants. The opportunity was afforded in June last, when Mr. Bibbins and the writer were present at the unveiling of the memorial to mark the birthplace of Francis Scott Key, at "Terra Rubra," Pipe Creek. Data gathered here from residents present from the Sam's Creek neighborhood led us to proceed to Frederick for further information.

Here Hon. Milton G. Urner, superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Sunday School for nearly a half century, suggested that Mrs. Laura Maynard Ramsburgh, a well known resident, of 105 E. Second Street, might be of this family.

The Maynard Bible.

Mrs. Ramsburgh proved to be the great granddaughter of Henry Maynard, and the owner of the venerable Howard-Maynard Bible, bequeathed by her



The Maynard Family Record.

Photographed from the Howard-Maynard Bible, now owned by Henry Maynard's great-granddaughter, Mrs. Laura Maynard Ramsburgh, of Frederick, Md. The first entry is the birth date of the first child baptized by Strawbridge.

By courtesy of "The Christian Advocate."

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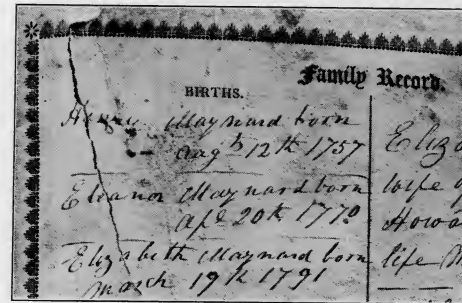
Believing that the crux of the long-debated question of the time of Strawbridge's arrival and the priority of Maryland Methodism could be largely determined by documentary evidence concerning Henry

Maynard, we recently sought to learn what was available concerning him and his descendants. The opportunity was afforded in June last, when Mr. Bibbins and the writer were present at the unveiling of the memorial to mark the birthplace of Francis Scott Key, at "Terra Rubra," Pipe Creek. Data gathered here from residents present from the Sam's Creek neighborhood led us to proceed to Frederick for further information.

Here Hon. Milton G. Urner, superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Sunday School for nearly a half century, suggested that Mrs. Laura Maynard Ramsburgh, a well known resident, of 105 E. Second Street, might be of this family.

The Maynard Bible.

Mrs. Ramsburgh proved to be the great granddaughter of Henry Maynard, and the owner of the venerable Howard-Maynard Bible, bequeathed by her



The Maynard Family Record.

Photographed from the Howard-Maynard Bible, now owned by Henry Maynard's great-granddaughter, Mrs. Laura Maynard Ramsburgh, of Frederick, Md. The first entry is the birth date of the first child baptized by Strawbridge.

By courtesy of "The Christian Advocate."

father James, the son of Ephraim (Howard) Maynard, mentioned by Dr. Roberts in Mr. Ruckle's interview of 1866.

When the volume was opened, there stood at the top of the birth column the record precisely as given by Dr. Roberts in 1866: "Henry Maynard, born August 12, 1757." When told of the vital bearing of this record on the issue of the Maryland origin of American Methodism, Mrs. Ramsburgh, who is of another communion, willingly held the ancient book open for the photographing of the entry concerning her great grandfather.

The birth entries of Henry and his wife Eleanor (daughter of Ephraim and Elizabeth Dorsey Howard, one of the foremost families of this section, for whom the Bible seems to have been begun) are followed by those of their children. They had three sons—E. H. (Ephraim Howard), 1794-1874; Basil, 1800-1883; and George Washington, 1802-1848; and three daughters. The date of Henry Maynard's death is given as December 28, 1837. His grave we found to be at the old Maynard homestead, which we were able to locate upon a later visit in August to New Windsor.

The Old Maynard Homestead and Spring.

Much valuable assistance was afforded us in reaching the original homestead by Mr. Charles Jones, of New Windsor, whose wife was the granddaughter of George W., Henry Maynard's youngest son. From him we learned that the original tract contained about 500 acres, which Henry inherited from his father, and divided among his three sons, bequeathing the stone homestead and farm to Basil, who died here in 1883.

A six-mile auto trip (via the McKinstrie's Mill Road across Sam's Creek and about a mile beyond Clemsonville) brought us to the substantial brick farmhouse of Nicholas Clemson, the present owner

of the old farm, "Strawberry Plains," which he purchased after the death of Basil Maynard, from whom he learned much of its history.

We rode up unannounced, and asked the tenant of the Maynard farm who was plowing nearby if there was "anything of interest about this old place?" He immediately replied: "Yes, the old people around here say a very noted baptism of a child took place down at that spring," pointing to a very strong-flowing spring at the foot of the homestead hill "several hundred yards from the house." Here again was the local tradition of the baptism of 1762 from a man who had never seen any of us before and did not know the object of our coming. Mr. Clemson soon drove up and confirmed the story which he had often heard from Basil Maynard, who had received it directly from his father, the "child of four or five," whom Strawbridge here baptized.

Second Preaching Place of Methodism.

Mr. Clemson showed us the site of the great walnut tree on the bank above the spring, which supplied a broad shade for the people who came to this home of John Maynard—"Strawbridge's second regular preaching place in addition to his own house." As Strawbridge did not hesitate to administer the rite of baptism, it was very natural for him as he finished preaching to have stepped down a few yards to the spring and baptized the child, who is said to have come with his father.

The tradition that John was the half-brother of Henry, and probably living here on his father's property, is confirmed by the latter's will, in 1790. He left to John and his two sisters, who were apparently provided for, "one shilling each," and gave the residue of his large estate to Henry, his executor. At the time of Henry's baptism his father already owned a considerable tract hereabouts. John purchased for himself a farm of 108 acres in 1772 on Little Pipe



Maynard Homestead and Spring. Second Regular Preaching Place of Methodism in America.

(1) Maynard Home. (2) Family Burying Ground. (3) Site of Great Walnut Tree, where according to local tradition Strawbridge preached the first (outdoor) sermon in America. (4) The Spring where Strawbridge baptized Henry Maynard in 1762.

Creek. (Frederick Records, Wills, 1790-1803, and Liber P. f. 326).

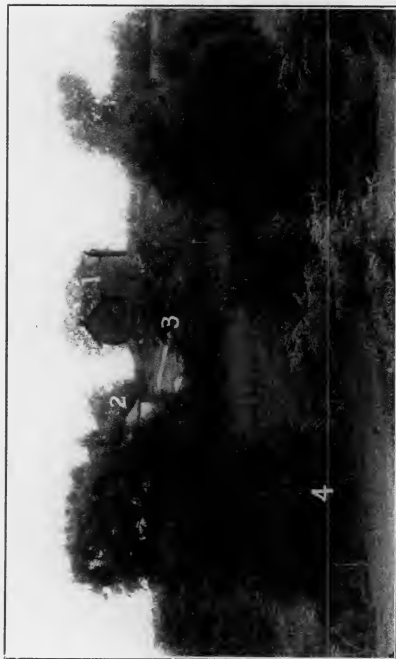
Although but one-third of the ancient "honeycomb stone mansion" remains, yet this contains the large living room, with its wide fireplace, the main entrance with its broad stairway, and guest room over head, which no doubt often sheltered Strawbridge on his early preaching journeys from his own home about four miles away. The earliest tide of Methodism swept west as well as east from Strawbridge's home, and the Log Chapel, which according to Dr. Hamilton was built in 1764. As Strawbridge removed later to Baltimore County, it veered eastward from the old centre toward Westminster and Baltimore, and the homes of these earliest converts were lost sight of, as their descendants carried the reviving influences of Methodism into other folds.

Certain it is that this ancient and fast-decaying Maynard homestead with the resting place of its owner behind it, and the ever-youthful spring below, a spot so epoch-making in Methodist annals should be carefully preserved and venerated.

The event which occurred here in 1762, not only marks the first baptism of American Methodism, and



By courtesy of "The Christian Advocate."
The Original Maynard Homestead.



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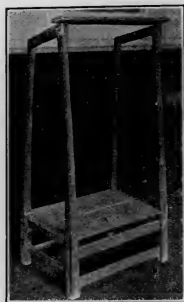
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Strawbridge Pulpit.
Found in Evans House.



His Monument.
Mt. Olivet, Baltimore.

CHAPTER III.

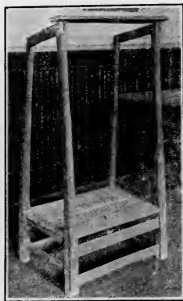
Birthplace of American Methodism.

From later developments it seems possible, however, to identify the veritable birthplace of Methodism, Strawbridge's own dwelling, as well as the spring typifying its onward movement.

The statements as to early Methodism of that well-known author, Col. J. Thos. Scharf, in his exhaustive "History of Western Maryland" (Vol. II., p. 903), made by the best church authority he could secure, seemed worthy of further investigation, and if found correct in the chief points to warrant confidence as to the rest. The author says: "The Log Church of Strawbridge on Sam's Creek or Pipe Creek, was built two years before the Chapel erected by Philip Embury in New York City, in 1766, and was the first church building erected by the Methodists on the American Continent." . . . "Mr. Strawbridge did not own any land until March 8, 1773, when according to the county records, he purchased the 50 acres on which he had resided for thirteen years from John England. The property was known as 'Brothers Inheritance,' and 'England's Chance,' nor did he ever sell it. Nearly six years after his decease his only heir, Robert Strawbridge, conveyed it to Richard Stevenson. This deed is dated January 23, 1787."

On examination of the Frederick Records, the indenture between John England and Robert Strawbridge was found made March 2, and recorded March 8, 1773. The 50 acre farm is described as "part of Brothers Inheritance and England's Chance," and after following certain metes and bounds "intersects with Park Hill" (the first tract of 2,680 acres, surveyed in this Sam's Creek section, for James Carroll in 1727).

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While the deed does not state that he had lived on this farm for thirteen years before its purchase, yet Col. Scharf, who was in charge of the State Land Office, was so well assured of the fact, that it is stated as equally authentic with the details of the purchase. This would verify Strawbridge's arrival in 1760.

As "Robert Strobbridge Joiner, of Baltimore County," received in 1787, the same amount £50 (a sum with vastly more purchasing power than now) as his father had paid for the farm on which he lived so long, there must have been a dwelling there when he purchased it. He would not have built upon rented land.

The house must have been there when he came, since we are told by Dr. Roberts and others that "as soon as he had arranged" (not built) "his house, he began to preach in it at once."

It became our purpose, if possible, to locate this farm and house, Strawbridge's first preaching place, from the title deeds and local traditions.

We learned from Mr. Charles Jones and Rev. J. T. Marsh, pastor of the New Windsor Circuit, that Mr. Philip B. Snader, one of the oldest Methodists of New Windsor, who was born on his grand-father's farm, next to the Log Meeting House, could locate the Strawbridge farm, if anyone could. Accompanied by Mr. Jones, Mr. Snader, and the latter's son-in-law, Mr. W. E. Baker, who has the garage near the station, we devoted the day after the pilgrimage, October 16, 1915, to this object.

First Methodist Society and Class Meeting.

We rode a mile out of the Marston (or Buffalo) Road from New Windsor, and turned to the left a half mile down a private road between the farms of Messrs. R. S. and E. E. Snader. The former was his home from his marriage until he moved to town, said Mr. Snader, and was always said to adjoin "Robert Strawbridge's farm," which contains still "the

oldest house in this neighborhood," noted for its venerable dwellings.

It was known as "the Log House under the rocks," being built on the sunny side of a picturesque ledge of ancient volcanic rocks, which form one side of the foundation and enclose the ground floor kitchen.

It was built of axe-hewn tree-logs "chinked and daubed," the chinks between the logs being filled up with loose stone and "daubed" over with the native clay, making it air-tight and warm. We reached the house along a sunken old road at the rear of Mr. Elwood Snader's property.

As we passed the rocks to the front of the house, the view burst upon us with great beauty, and showed that those who settled here had a keen eye for a choice situation. To the left of the homestead resting under the rocks stretched a rolling field of green wheat, the new crop that may have brought Strawbridge hither. To the right of the road the garden aglow with old-fashioned flowers swept down to green meadows on both sides of a stream watering the fertile fields, which now ascended to a stately hill covered with a rich autumn-tinted woodland. (Page 2.)

The present owner is Mr. Daniel J. Utz, a thrifty Dunkard, who since he bought the farm in April of this year, has added a rear porch and done much to rescue it from its fast-decaying state. The original house was about twenty by eighteen feet, and contained the ground floor kitchen, the large living-room over it, and three bed-rooms above this. The line where another room, 10 by 18 feet, was added to the right of the chimney on the two upper floors can be distinctly seen. The old house was weather-boarded over by a recent owner, but the uneven log surface of the inner walls was still very perceptible despite the plastered surface, when our attention was drawn to a china closet which stood close to the wall at the bottom, but extended some inches from it at

the top. The irregularities of form and surface about this rugged old homestead in its rarely beautiful setting struck us as peculiarly appropriate. The constructive work begun here, despite irregularities of form and method, has become by its emphasis of essentials and fearless disregard of non-essentials, a potent world-influence in spiritual regeneration and upbuilding.

It was no doubt in this ancient dwelling that Strawbridge preached the first Methodist sermon on this continent. Here he organized the first society and class meeting, to which Asbury alluded when he wrote in his journal May 5, 1801, "Here Mr. Strawbridge formed the first society in Maryland—and America."

It was doubtless at dinner in the room beneath the living-room that Mrs. Strawbridge spoke the timely word to John Evans, who came to aid in getting in their crops, which led to his conversion and the opening of his quaint log house, still standing, for this first class meeting. This still older house shows the original appearance of Strawbridge's home. It remained a preaching place until 1809, sending forth many converts and itinerants.

How Traditions Agree With Facts.

In order to learn how local tradition was verified by fact, the Strawbridge deed of 1773 for 50 acres, which had been obtained the day before from Frederick, was read. Mr. Utz at once stated that he was positive his deed showed the farm to be part of the tracts named therein "Brothers Inheritance" and "England's Chance." This fact was later verified from present and intermediate deeds, and data recorded at Westminster. When it was explained that the present farm contained 32 acres, but that a dozen acres had been sold from one end of the original farm to a Mr. Harman, and a half-dozen to another party, its identity with the Strawbridge farm of 50 acres

was even more conclusive. The distance, "about a mile from the Log Meeting House," as stated by all the older authorities, furnished still further proof.

The statement of the late Mr. Isaiah Devilbiss, the most venerable Methodist in this locality, that the Utz property was always known as the "Strawbridge house and farm," was also quoted by Mr. Snader.

Further evidence of the antiquity of the buildings was seen in the double barn of great axe-hewn oak logs, with the bark still attached in some cases.

First Methodist Church Building in America.

On our way to visit the site of the Log Meeting House, we rode from the the Strawbridge farm, the first preaching place of Methodism, past the site of the "great Strawbridge oak" (thirty-four feet around the base) on the original farm of Andrew Poulson (now Mr. Harry Englar's), where the second Strawbridge class meeting was formed, for which Mr. Poulson gave the site for Poulson's Chapel, which



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In this cabin, one of the first preaching places of Robert Strawbridge, Methodist services were held for forty years, from 1768-1809. Here lived John Evans, the first class leader (1735-1827).

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A short distance further, on the farm of David E. Stem, about two miles from New Windsor, a little to the right of the Marston Road, we reached the site of the Log Meeting House, the first place of



The Site of the Strawbridge Oak.

This great white oak, 34 feet around the base, was cut down in 1907. It was Robert Strawbridge's preaching place after the congregations outgrew his log house a mile away. It adjoined a fine spring, still flowing (to the right, under the tree). It was on Andrew Poulson's farm where Strawbridge formed the second class meeting and met the people until the Log Meeting House was completed. The substantial house of old Flemish bond brick, now owned by Harry Englar, is probably the original home of Andrew Poulson, who gave the site of Poulson's Chapel (now succeeded by Stone Chapel).

By courtesy of "The Christian Advocate."



Stone Chapel 1783.
Successor of Poulson's Chapel.



Jesse Durbin's House.



Jacob Caspell's House, 1758.

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Jacob Cascell's House, 1758.



Bethel Chapel, 1821, Rebuilt 1860.

The successor of the Log Meeting House. Warfield House to the right.



Alexander Warfield's House.

Preaching place 1801-1821.

Methodist worship ever erected for this purpose on this continent. Here Mr. Snader showed us the spot where after the chapel was torn down in 1844, he had as a child seen the logs piled against the fence, until rebuilt into a sheep barn at the end of the great barn near the roadside.

There is no proof that it was "never finished," and there was no need that it should be "deeded to the church," as claimed by one writer. Years after it was torn down, the grass where it stood was much greener than around it, from the plaster from the walls, it was said, which fertilized the soil.

From careful measurements from data supplied by those who knew the location, Dr. J. F. Goucher, to whom the church is deeply indebted for his devoted



The Original Sam's Creek Log Meeting House.

24x24 1/4 feet. Built 1764, by Robert Strawbridge for the First Methodist Society and Class Meeting formed at his house.



The Site of the Original Log Chapel.

The site of this building, erected by Strawbridge about 1764 and demolished in 1844, marked by the pedestal of a monument to Robert Strawbridge, placed here in 1914—the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary year of its erection.



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labors in gathering the early facts, was enabled to direct the marking in its 150th year (1914), of the exact site of the Log Meeting House. The granite and concrete marker which is intended to form the pedestal of the proposed monument to Robert Strawbridge bears the inscription:

The First Preacher of American Methodism
Robert Strawbridge
Arrived in Frederick Co. About 1760. Died 1781.
On This Spot Stood
The Log Meeting House
Erected About 1764

The First Methodist Meeting House in America.

When the monument is ready for erection, perhaps on the ridge of the hill, where it will command the landscape as Strawbridge's evangelism did the region, it should be a noble and adequate national memorial to the man who by record, tradition and by the fruits of his labors founded American Methodism prior to any other influence, and all the more because the actual evidences of his life and work exist here in greater abundance than those available elsewhere to the founder of any other religious organization.

These points have not been developed in the spirit of controversy, but simply as matters worthy of the most careful investigation. Since however the question of Methodist priority is soon to be settled by a Commission from the different branches of the church, it is well to bear in mind that Maryland possesses today as a matter of fact and record:

(1) The official Irish Shipping-Lists to Maryland, affording data as to the probable time of Strawbridge's arrival in America.

(2) The first preaching place of Methodism, on the original farm of Strawbridge, where the first society and class meeting were formed.

(3) The second preaching place of Methodism, and the place where the first baptism was performed

by Strawbridge, at the ancient Maynard homestead and spring.

(4) The family birth record, which fixes the time of his birth and of this baptism as 1762, in the Maynard Bible.

(5) The Poulson Farm, where the second class meeting was formed.

(6) The site of the First Methodist Meeting House in America, that of the Log Chapel built by Strawbridge in 1764.

(7) The Henry Willis House, where the first Methodist bishop wrote in 1801 his knowledge and conviction as to the formation by Strawbridge in this region of "the first Methodist Society in America."

When it is considered that all of these significant connecting links with the foundation of Methodism still remain in striking confirmation of the statements of Strawbridge's contemporaries and later writers, it becomes evident that Maryland's claim to priority has a much firmer basis in fact than even many of its own advocates have heretofore supposed.

Maryland's Priority Confirmed.

The coming of Robert Strawbridge to Maryland marks the American beginning of a world movement toward spiritual democracy. The distinctive phases of evangelism for which he contended became impressed with such immediate and enduring success upon the movement he inaugurated in the frontier wilderness, that the mere time of its inception was lost sight of in its abounding results.

The question of the beginning of his work as compared with that of Philip Embury in New York, was not a matter of conjecture or debate in the minds of early Maryland Methodists. They were so assured of the potential facts that this issue was never raised until they were no longer at hand to verify well-established tradition.

The religious data of a scattered rural community like Sam's Creek was naturally not as carefully preserved as in an established city centre, frequently written about by church leaders like that of John Street, New York. Results were chiefly chronicled in Maryland upon the heart-tablets of the increasing host of witnesses which arose to call Strawbridge "blessed."

John Street's Needs Record Its Beginnings.

The Maryland Society never found it necessary to register its needs in a request for aid, as did Thomas Taylor, one of the earliest official members of John Street, and one of the eight joint-purchasers of the church site. In his urgent appeal to Wesley and the English Conference in April, 1768, for "an able, experienced preacher, of both gifts and graces necessary for the work," he supplied an accurate account of its start "eighteen months ago" (in October,

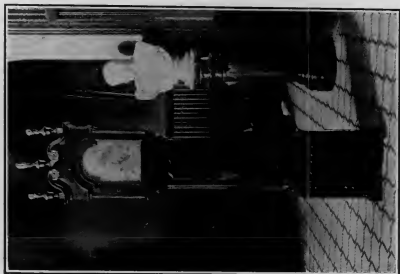
1766), "when it pleased God to rouse up Mr. Embury to employ his talent, for several years hid in a napkin." He records its feeble state at the end of the first year, when he arrived from England in the fall of 1767, as consisting of but "two classes of six or seven men, and about the same number of women, although Mr. Embury never had yet met the society apart from the congregation." Then after nearly a year and a half's labors of Embury and Captain Webb, it began to increase, and had "about a hundred members," when Pilmoor arrived in 1770, and Embury retired to upper New York.

New York Methodism started in the chief seaport of the colonies, which in 1768 had reached 20,000 inhabitants. Maryland Methodism started on the frontier of an essentially rural province, whose future metropolis, Baltimore, had but begun its existence thirty years before. It began on the edge of civilization, with constant perils from the wilderness and dread of the savage. Settlements were sparse, roads few and dangerous, chiefly Indian trails and horse paths, and the gathering of people infrequent and difficult.

Yet when Asbury held the first Annual Conference in Philadelphia in 1773, New York reported but 150 members, while Maryland reported 500, out of a total of 1,160 in America.

At the Second Conference, held in 1774, New York reported 222 members, and Maryland 1,063, more than double her number of the preceding year. At the Conference in 1776, which met now at Baltimore as the "natural centre," New York had fallen to 132 members, while Baltimore alone had increased to 900 members in five years and Virginia, also largely supplied with Strawbridge's itinerants, to 1,600, out of a total church membership of 4,921.

The query naturally arises, "Whence this great disparity in results, if both societies started, as has



Clock of William Watters.

The first native Methodist itinerant.



RELICS OF EARLY METHODISM.

Bell of Cokesbury College, begun 1785.
(Now in use at Goucher College.)

This bell saluted Washington as he passed through Abingdon, Md., to New York, in 1789, to be inaugurated President.

been claimed," "about the same time," or the New York Society "at least nine or twelve months previous to the first collected by Mr. Strawbridge."

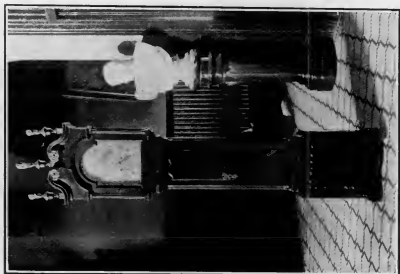
It would seem to the impartial view that such a comparative paucity of results on the one hand could only be accounted for by less favorable conditions, less zealous labors, or a much later beginning. Since the environment in this metropolitan centre should have been far more propitious for growth than Strawbridge's frontier surroundings, it would seem only logical, in order not to reflect too seriously on the zeal with which the early John Street work was conducted, to concede to Maryland a much earlier start.

The disparity in membership was no less noticeable than in native itinerants raised up.

When Asbury, after spending his first year in America in an effort to strengthen the work in and about New York and Philadelphia, and to establish Wesley's chosen plan of the itinerancy, turned southward, lamenting "my brethren seem unwilling to leave the cities," he soon reached the scene of Strawbridge's heroic labors, and is forced to exclaim: "The Lord has done great things for this people."

Here in Christmas week, 1772, he was enabled to hold the first quarterly conference of record in America, from the ten or twelve native local preachers and exhorters already raised up by the labors of Strawbridge and his associates. The meeting was held at the house of one of Strawbridge's converts, James Presbury. The names of this great vanguard of American Methodism were: Richard Owen, William Watters, Richard Webster, Nathaniel Perigau, Isaac Rollins, Hezekiah Bonham, Nicholas Watters, Sater Stephenson, J. Presbury, Philip Gatch and according to Lednum, probably Aquila Stanford and Abraham Rollins.

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one man's labors with 500 adherents could have been the result of a movement started "nine or twelve months after" that of Embury, in October, 1766, which had produced but a "hundred and fifty members," and no native workers to its credit?

Maryland Itinerants Sustain Church During the Revolution.

Had it not been for Strawbridge's native itinerants it is a serious question if Methodism would have retained its hold on the country, and not been exterminated root and branch during the Revolutionary conflict. When John Street, for seven annual conferences, from 1776 to '83, was declared "no longer an appointment," and the society in New England "had become extinct," when Wesley's itinerants had all returned to England or "located," and even the loyal Asbury was forced into retirement, the session of the Conference was still held in 1778, with William Watters, Strawbridge's first native itinerant, presiding. In 1777, fourteen circuits, supplied by 36 preachers, had been the record with an increase in membership of 2,047, amounting in all to 6,968 members, at this period which tried men's souls.

At the session of 1778, the New York, Philadelphia and four other circuits were omitted entirely, but six new ones were added in the South, according to the careful historian Stevens. As Asbury was in seclusion, the committee on General Superintendency appointed at the previous session was in active charge of the work. Four of its five members, Watters, Gatch, Drumgoole and Ruff were Strawbridge's converts or associates.

When peace was declared in 1783, John Dickens could rally but sixty members in New York of the 14,000 returned; of which only 1,620 were from north of Maryland.

When in consequence of the intrepid labors largely of the first native itinerants, and those added

thereto, and of the resolute stand of Strawbridge and his spiritual sons on the imperative need for the administration of the sacraments, the distinctive organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church was formed, that historic meeting occurred where the earliest and strongest impulses for its growth were born and consistently continued. And that place was not New York, but Maryland.

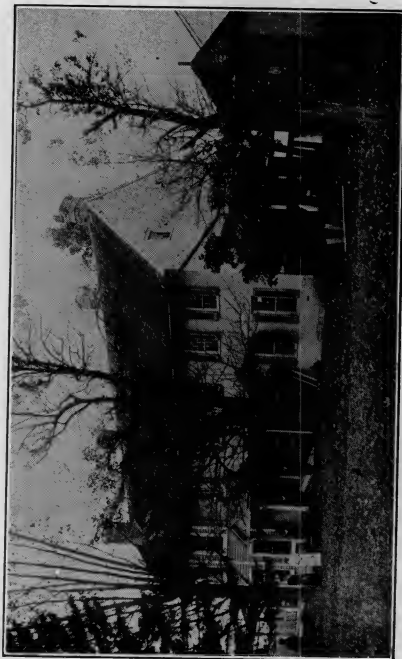
Of the 14,980 members of the church when the Christmas Conference met in Baltimore in 1784, 13,330 were in the Southern states.

Of the 65 chapels, 56 were south of Mason and Dixon's Line, 23 in Maryland, 15 in Virginia, 9 in North Carolina, 9 in Delaware; with 5 in Pennsylvania, 4 in New Jersey, and only one, and that Wesley Chapel, in New York.

This was the significant result a score of years after Strawbridge erected the Log Meeting House on Sam's Creek in 1764.

What can be deemed no less significant was the fact that in October 1788, "the first Conference ever held in New York," occurred at John Street, a full score of years after the site was purchased and twenty-two years after Embury began his work. This session seems to have been deemed so unimportant that it was "not only omitted in the General Minutes, but also 'in all our ecclesiastical histories,' says Wakeley, and Asbury alludes to it but in one sentence in his journal. Singular, indeed, if this be "the cradle of Methodism," that the early leaders should so have neglected to chronicle the details which should warrant such a title. The results do not show that they were too busy making history to record it!

This comparison in growth still continued a dozen years later, when in 1800 the number of Methodists was 63,950, of which 45,280 were in the Southern States.



"Wakefield," Henry Willis's Home on Pipe Creek.

Where the Conference met May 1-5, 1801, and Bishop Asbury wrote in his Journal: "Here Strawbridge formed the first Society in Maryland—and America." (Those to the right of the picture are Mr. Snader, Mr. Jones and Mr. Grant Bixler, the present owner of the homestead.)

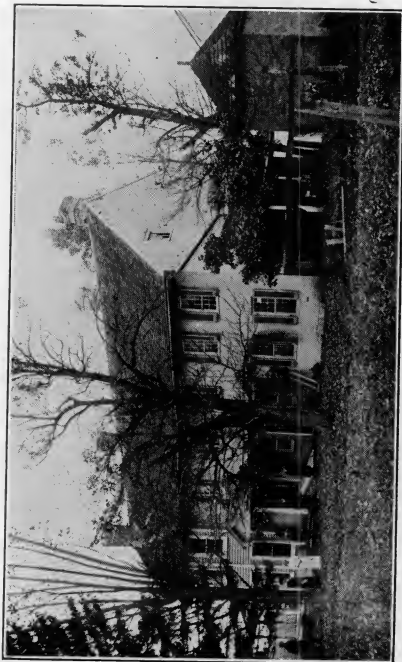
Asbury's Testimony to Strawbridge's Priority

Was it any wonder that with these cumulative proofs of Strawbridge's mission before him at the close of the Conference of forty members, removed from fever-stricken Baltimore, to the hospitable home of Henry Willis, still standing on Pipe Creek, Bishop Asbury should have written the indubitable facts, learned there at first hand, in his journal, May 5, 1801: "Here Mr. Strawbridge formed the first society in Maryland—and America." "The italics are his own," notes Bishop McTyeire, "and have the meaning of a man who sure of his information would settle the question" once and for all.

If such an emphatic statement had been made of the work of Embury, does any one doubt that the John Street historians would have accepted it without question?

As Bishop Asbury had come to know the fruits of Maryland Methodism, as he had found here as nowhere else the abundant nucleus for the organization of the church, and repeated support for his first educational project, Cokesbury College, he had become convinced that it was the vital, throbbing tide of fervent evangelism launched by Strawbridge at Sam's Creek that had spread over the country. Though he was one of the most strenuous opponents of what he deemed Strawbridge's "irregularities," he did not hesitate as the head of the church to pay him this tribute as the source and spring of its later affluent flood of activities, which numbered in 1812, just fifty years after Strawbridge performed the first American baptism of Henry Maynard, 195,350 adherents, of which 122,560 were in Maryland and its adjoining states to the south.

Had Bishop Asbury entertained any similar conviction concerning Embury or the rise of the church at John Street, as he expressed regarding Strawbridge, in 1801, it is curious that he did not record



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it in his journal, when he held the first belated Conference in New York in 1788. His only entry on that occasion was: "Tues., 30 Sept., 1788. Our Conference began and continued until Saturday, the 4th of October."

Even the annals of John Street fail to make much of this inviting occasion for history-making, since they only record: "The church was cleaned for the occasion. It footed the bills, besides taking good care of the bishop's horses and throwing in a bridle."

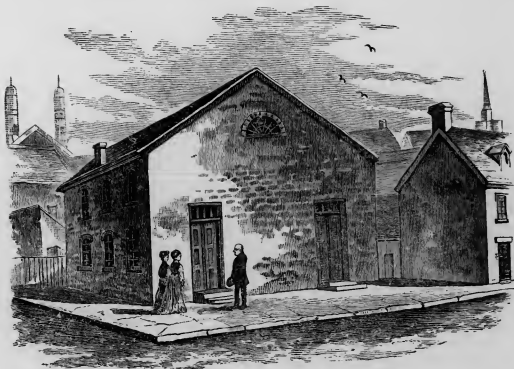
The gift of the "bridle" and the care of his horses failed to impress the bishop with New York's priority in church history. Although he had spent much of his first year in America in the environs of Wesley Chapel and knew its claims, he did not hesitate to ascribe to Sam's Creek its just due in 1801, for its pre-eminence in hospitality as well as in church origin.

He wrote in his journal the day he left Henry Willis' gracious abode: "Our own people and the friends in the settlement were equally kind, and we had rich entertainment."

The bishop's sentiment was heartily echoed 114 years later, when a pilgrimage of eighteen autos from a Baltimore suburban church (at Roland Park) was welcomed to this neighborhood on October 16, 1915. As some of the pilgrims viewed the spacious rooms and hall of Willis' ancient brick dwelling of Flemish bond, it seemed to them a special providence which gathered here in 1801, instead of in stricken Baltimore, the forty preachers who knew the facts of this historic region, and the church's first bishop, who recorded in his own hand his knowledge and belief as to the origin of the Methodist Church in America. A tablet recording Asbury's tribute, in bronze, should mark the spot as an enduring memorial to the origin of the church and to both Strawbridge and Willis, whose grave lies nearby, unmarked and neglected,

although the stone slab was seen here by one of the party within recent years.

It is interesting over a century later to note, according to the "Methodist Year Book for 1916," that the same local disparity in strength and results still continues to this day. The "Year Book" states that Baltimore with but 558,485 inhabitants, possesses 85 Methodist Churches with 26,629 members, and 33,102 in the Sunday Schools; while New York, with nearly ten times its inhabitants, has not twice the number of churches or members, the former numbering but 141, and the latter 47,879, with 51,376 Sunday School scholars. If to these 85 Methodist Episcopal Churches in Baltimore be added the 40 of the



Lovely Lane Meeting House, 1774.

Here in Baltimore, December 24, 1784, occurred "the most important event in the history of early American Methodism," the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, with 15,000 members; and the Ordination of Bishop Asbury.

Methodist Protestant, Methodist Episcopal, South, and Independent Methodist branches of the mother church, and the 33 of the Colored Methodist Churches—all the one hundred and fifty and over—the local offspring of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, as organized here in Maryland in 1784, but a score of years after Strawbridge built the first Methodist place of worship at Sam's Creek, the influence of his labors will be seen to be increasingly pervasive and cumulative in its permanent results.

The collective membership in Baltimore alone of these churches amounts today to 46,000, while the membership of the Baltimore or Maryland Conferences numbers 253,000 out of a total of six and a half millions in the country.

Asbury Society Foretokens Public Schools.

Nor can the influence of early Methodism in Maryland be measured simply in terms of churches and church membership.

The impulsive force for education was immediate and progressive with the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America at this Christmas Conference, held at Lovely Lane Chapel, "the most important event in the history of early American Methodism," as one writer terms it.

Not only did the First Methodist Institution of Learning—Cokesbury College, here have its inception, of which the corner stone was laid the following June, 1785; but the interest of the church in popular education was intensive and continuous, and became the forerunner in large measure of the local public school system.

What Green, the historian, in his masterly "History of the English People," has noted as distinctive of the religious movement "born in a great University," with the Wesleys and the Holy Club in England, took place in a somewhat different manner with the spread of Methodism under Strawbridge and Asbury in America.

"The religious revival which began in a small knot of Oxford students," Green observes, "changed after a time the whole tone of English society. The church was restored to life and activity. Religion carried to the hearts of the people a fresh spirit of moral zeal, while it purified our literature and our manners. A new philanthropy reformed our prisons, infused clemency and wisdom into our penal laws, abolished the slave trade and gave the first impulse to popular education."

Wesley founded the first school at Kingswood, England, in 1739, the year from which the church dates.

Asbury, it is said, formed the first American Sunday School in 1786, in Virginia. This was followed by occasional schools in Baltimore, at Light Street Conference Room.

Finding that many of the children gathered in the early Sunday Schools were too illiterate to study or even to read the Scriptures, the Church found it necessary to teach them the rudiments of learning, and thus became the progenitor of the public schools. This systematic movement began with the formation of the Asbury Sunday School Society according to the records, when "a meeting of a number of Religious Persons was held at the Conference Room, Light Street, on Monday evening, Oct. 21, 1816, to take into consideration the propriety and utility of a free school."

These schools were not for the children of the church, but for the very poor and ignorant. The first item of expense was two dozen ABC books. The scholars were classified as (1) Those unacquainted with letters; (2) those who spell words of two or more letters; (3) of two or more syllables; (4) read short sentences; (5) begin to read the New Testament; (6) begin to read the Bible. The writing was taught on long desks strewn with sand.

The Asbury Sunday School Society, the first and oldest continuous society in the city, though its work was done in the Methodist Church, and particularly at City Station, was a general society with inde-



Bishop Francis Asbury.
(Born 1745; died March 31, 1816.)
Portrait by Polk, in 1794.

In his American ministry he preached 16,500 sermons, ordained 4,000 preachers, and traveled 247,000 miles, mostly on horseback.

pendent officers, though still connected with First Church.

The work widened as adult and night schools were formed, and in 1820, the Asbury Juvenile Economical Society started a kind of children's savings bank, anticipating by nearly a century the modern movement in the public schools. Of \$492 spent the first two years, by the McKendreean Society (for girls), formed a month after the Asbury Society (for boys), \$192 was for clothing, and \$55 for shoes alone. Primers, quills and slate pencils were constant requisitions as well as Testaments and Bibles.

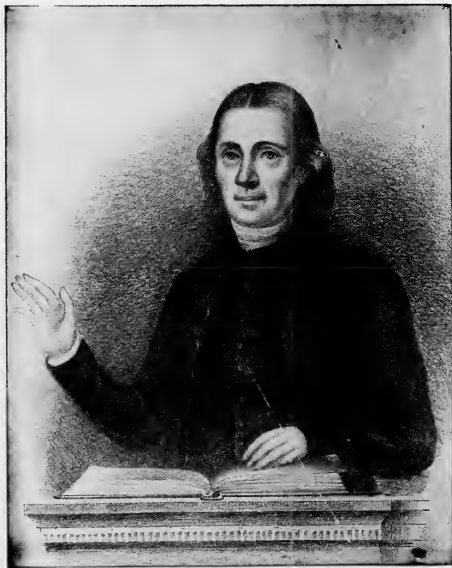
Thirty-eight schools, some of which have become influential churches with missions in turn, have been the offspring of the Asbury Society, which according to the date upon its venerable banner, "A. D., 1816," will celebrate its centenary the present year.

That the old Maryland priorities in spiritual fervor and education are being maintained in this birthright region is evident, when one recalls the liberal foundation of Goucher College as the centenary memorial to the organization of the church of Strawbridge and Asbury in 1784. Its neighbor, First Church, with its fifteen hundred members, is no less the lineal successor of Lovely Lane, where the church was formed, and with its century-old Sunday School, numbering nearly a thousand members, is also the direct descendant in turn of the old Asbury Sunday School Society of 1816.

By the abounding "fruits of their labors" the great initial work of the fervent evangelist Strawbridge, and of the skilled organizer and administrator, Asbury, are still today confirmed and established in our midst.

One hundred and fifty-two years have intervened since Strawbridge gathered his handful of worshipers in the humble Log Meeting House on Sam's Creek in 1764, but the church he founded with its nearly four

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